

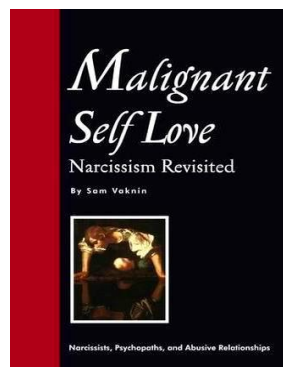
The Inverted Narcissist

Frequently Asked Question # 66

By: [Dr. Sam Vaknin](#)

With contributions by members of the [Narcissism List](#)

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The Clinical Picture and Developmental Roots - Opening Remarks

Terminology

Codependents

People who depend on other people for their emotional gratification and the performance of Ego or daily functions. They are needy, demanding, and submissive. They fear abandonment, cling and display immature behaviours in their effort to maintain the "relationship" with their companion or mate upon whom they depend. No matter what abuse is inflicted upon them – they remain in the relationship. By eagerly becoming victims, codependents seek to control their abusers.

See also a description of the [Dependent Personality Disorder](#) - or its definition in the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual](#) (DSM-IV-TR, 2000).

Inverted Narcissist

Also called "covert narcissist", this is a co-dependent who depends exclusively on narcissists (narcissist-co-dependent). If you are living with a narcissist, have a relationship with one, if you are married to one, if you are working with a narcissist, etc. – it does **NOT** mean that you are an inverted narcissist.

To "qualify" as an inverted narcissist, you must **CRAVE** to be in a relationship with a narcissist, regardless of any abuse inflicted on you by him/her. You must **ACTIVELY** seek relationships with narcissists and **ONLY** with narcissists, no matter what your (bitter and traumatic) past experience has been. You must feel **EMPTY** and **UNHAPPY** in relationships with **ANY OTHER** kind of person. Only then, and if you satisfy the other diagnostic criteria of a Dependent Personality Disorder, can you be safely labelled an "inverted narcissist".

Counterdependents

Most "classical" (overt) narcissists are counterdependent. Their emotions and needs are buried under "scar tissue" which had formed, coalesced, and hardened during years of one form of abuse or another. Grandiosity, a sense of [entitlement](#), a lack of [empathy](#), and overweening haughtiness usually hide gnawing insecurity and a fluctuating sense of self-worth.

Counterdependents are contumacious ([reject and despise authority](#)), fiercely independent, controlling, self-centered, and [aggressive](#). They fear intimacy and are locked into cycles of hesitant approach followed by avoidance of commitment. They are "lone wolves" and bad team players.

Counterdependence is a reaction formation. The counterdependent dreads his own weaknesses. He seeks to overcome them by projecting an image of omnipotence, omniscience, success, self-sufficiency, and superiority.

Introduction

Codependence is an important and integral part of narcissism. Narcissists are either counterdependent or codependent (Inverted).

The DSM-IV-TR uses 9 criteria to define the [Narcissistic Personality Disorder \(NPD\)](#). It is sufficient to show signs of 5 of them to be diagnosed as a narcissist. Thus, theoretically, it is possible to have NPD without being grandiose.

Many researchers (Alexander Lowen, Jeffrey Satinover, Theodore Millon and others) suggested a "taxonomy" of pathological narcissism. They divided narcissists to sub-groups (very much as I did with my [somatic versus cerebral narcissist](#) dichotomy).

Lowen, for instance, talks about the "phallic" narcissist versus others. Satinover and Millon make a very important distinction between narcissists who were raised by "classically" abusive parents – and those who were raised by doting and smothering or domineering mothers.

Glenn O. Gabbard in "Psychodynamic Psychiatry in Clinical Practice" [The DSM-IV-TR Edition. Comments on Cluster B Personality Disorders – Narcissistic. American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 2000] we find this:

"...what definitive criteria can be used to differentiate healthy from pathological narcissism? The time honoured criteria of psychological health – to love and to work – are only partly useful in answering this question."

"An individual's work history may provide little help in making the distinction. Highly disturbed narcissistic individuals may find extraordinary success in certain professions, such as big business, the arts, politics, the entertainment industry, athletics and televangelism field. In some cases, however, narcissistic pathology may be reflected in a superficial quality to one's professional interests, as though achievement in and acclaim are more important than mastery of the field itself."

Pathological forms of narcissism are more easily identified by the quality of the individual's relationships.

One tragedy affecting these people is their inability to love. Healthy interpersonal relationships can be recognised by qualities such as empathy and concern for the feelings of others, a genuine interest in the ideas of others, the ability to tolerate ambivalence in long-term relationships without giving up, and a capacity to acknowledge one's own contribution to interpersonal conflicts. People who are characterised by these qualities may at times use others to gratify their own needs, but the tendency occurs in the broader context of sensitive interpersonal relatedness rather than as a pervasive style of dealing with other people. On the other hand, the person with a Narcissistic Personality Disorder approaches people as objects to be used up and discarded according to his or her needs, without regard for their feelings.

People are not viewed as having a separate existence or as having needs of their own. The individual with a Narcissistic Personality Disorder frequently ends a relationship after a

short time, usually when the other person begins to make demands stemming from for his or her own needs. Most importantly, such relationships clearly do not 'work' in terms of the narcissist's ability to maintain his or her own sense of self-esteem."

"...These criteria [the DSM-IV-TR's] identify a certain kind of narcissistic patient – specifically, the arrogant, boastful, 'noisy' individual who demands to be in the spotlight. However, they fail to characterise the shy, quietly grandiose, narcissistic individual whose extreme sensitivity to slights leads to an assiduous avoidance of the spotlight."

The DSM-III-R alluded to at least two types of narcissists, but the DSM-IV-TR committee chose to delete this:

"...included criterion, 'reacts to criticism with feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation (even not if expressed)' due to lack of 'specificity'."

Other theoreticians, clinicians and researchers similarly suggested a division between "the oblivious narcissist" (a.k.a. overt) and "the hypervigilant narcissist" (a.k.a. covert).

(continued below)

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The Compensatory versus the Classic Narcissist

Another interesting distinction, suggested by Dave Kelly in his excellent PTYPES Web site (<http://www.ptypes.com>) is between the Compensatory Type NPD and the Classic NPD (described in the DSM-IV-TR).

Here are the Compensatory NPD criteria according to Dave Kelly:

"Personality Types proposes Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Disorder as a pervasive pattern of unstable, covert narcissistic behaviours that derive from an underlying

sense of insecurity and weakness rather than from genuine feelings of self-confidence and high self-esteem, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by six (or more) of the criteria below.

The basic trait of the Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Type is a pattern of overtly narcissistic behaviours (that) derive from an underlying sense of insecurity and weakness, rather than from genuine feelings of self-confidence and high self-esteem."

The Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Type:

- *Seeks to create an illusion of superiority and to build up an image of high self-worth [Millon];*
- *Strives for recognition and prestige to compensate for the lack of a feeling of self-worth;*
- *May "acquire a deprecatory attitude in which the achievements of others are ridiculed and degraded" [Millon];*
- *Has persistent aspirations for glory and status [Millon];*
- *Has a tendency to exaggerate and boast [Millon];*
- *Is sensitive to how others react to him, watches and listens carefully for critical judgement, and feels slighted by disapproval [Millon];*
- *"Is prone to feel shamed and humiliated and especially (anxious) and vulnerable to the judgements of others" [Millon];*
- *Covers up a sense of inadequacy and deficiency with pseudo-arrogance and pseudo-grandiosity [Millon];*
- *Has a tendency to periodic hypochondria [Forman];*
- *Alternates between feelings of emptiness and deadness and states of excitement and excess energy [Forman];*
- *Entertains fantasies of greatness, constantly striving for perfection, genius, or stardom [Forman];*
- *Has a history of searching for an idealised partner and has an intense need for affirmation and confirmation in relationships [Forman];*
- *Frequently entertains a wishful, exaggerated and unrealistic concept of himself, which he can't possibly measure up to [Reich];*
- *Produces (too quickly) work not up to the level of his abilities because of an overwhelmingly strong need for the immediate gratification of success [Reich];*
- *Is touchy, quick to take offence at the slightest provocation, continually anticipating attack and danger, reacting with anger and fantasies of revenge when he feels himself frustrated in his need for constant admiration [Reich];*
- *Is self-conscious, due to a dependence on approval from others [Reich];*
- *Suffers regularly from repetitive oscillations of self-esteem [Reich];*
- *Seeks to undo feelings of inadequacy by forcing everyone's attention and admiration upon himself [Reich];*
- *May react with self-contempt and depression to the lack of fulfilment of his grandiose expectations [Riso].*

Sources:

Forman, Max. Narcissistic Disorders and the Oedipal Fixations. In Feldstein, J.J. (Ed.), The Annual of Psychoanalysis. Volume IV. New York: International Universities [1976] pp. 65-92.

Millon, Theodore, and Roger D. Davis. Disorders of Personality: DSM-IV and Beyond. 2nd Ed. New York: Wiley, [1996] pp. 411-12.

Reich, Annie, [1986]. Pathological Forms of Self-Esteem Regulation. In Morrison, A. P., (Ed.), Essential Papers on Narcissism. pp. 44-60. Reprint from 1960. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. Volume 15, pp. 205-32.

Riso, Don Richard. Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery. Boston: Houghton Mifflin [1987] pp. 102-3.

Speculative Diagnostic Criteria for Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Disorder

A pervasive pattern of self-inflation, pseudo-confidence, exhibitionism, and strivings for prestige, that compensates for feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, as indicated by the following:

- *Pseudo-confidence compensating for an underlying condition of insecurity and feelings of helplessness;*
- *Pretentiousness, self-inflation;*
- *Exhibitionism in the pursuit of attention, recognition, and glory;*
- *Strivings for prestige to enhance self-esteem;*
- *Deceitfulness and manipulateness in the service of maintaining feelings of superiority;*
- *Idealisation in relationships;*
- *Fragmentation of the self: feelings of emptiness and deadness;*
- *A proud, hubristic disposition;*
- *Hypochondriasis;*
- *Substance abuse;*
- *Self-destructiveness.*

Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Disorder corresponds to Ernest Jones' narcissistic "God Complex", Annie Reich's "Compensatory Narcissism", Heinz Kohut's "Narcissistic Personality Disorder", and Theodore Millon's "Compensatory Narcissist".

Millon, Theodore, and Roger D. Davis. Disorders of Personality: DSM-IV and Beyond. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley, 1996. 411-12.

Compare this to the classic type:

Narcissistic Personality Type

The basic trait of the Narcissistic Personality Type is a pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy.

The Narcissistic Personality Type:

- Reacts to criticism with feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation;
- Is interpersonally exploitive: takes advantage of others to achieve his own ends;

- Has a grandiose sense of self-importance;
- Believes that his problems are unique and can be understood only by other special people;
- Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love;
- Has a sense of entitlement: an unreasonable expectation of especially favourable treatment;
- Requires much attention and admiration of others;
- Lacks empathy: fails to recognise and experience how others feel;
- Is preoccupied with feelings of envy.

This is mainly the DSM-III-R view. Pay attention to the not so subtle changes in the DSM-IV-TR – click [here](#) to view them and [here](#) for more about pathological narcissism.

(continued below)

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The Inverted Narcissist

It is clear that there is, indeed, an hitherto neglected type of narcissist. It is the "self-effacing" or "introverted" narcissist. We call it the Inverted Narcissist (hereinafter: IN). Others call it "narcissist-codependent" or "N-magnet" (which erroneously implies passivity and victimhood). Alan Rappaport suggested the name (and diagnosis) ["co-narcissist"](#).

This is a narcissist who, in many respects, is the mirror image of the "classical" narcissist. The psychodynamics of the Inverted Narcissist are not clear, nor are its developmental roots. Perhaps it is the product of an overweening Primary Object or caregiver. Perhaps excessive abuse leads to the repression of even the narcissistic and other defence mechanisms. Perhaps the parents suppress every

manifestation of grandiosity (very common in early childhood) and of narcissism – so that the narcissistic defence mechanism is "inverted" and internalised in this unusual form.

These narcissists are self-effacing, sensitive, emotionally fragile, sometimes socially phobic. They derive all their self-esteem and sense of self-worth from the outside (others), are pathologically envious (a [transformation of aggression](#)), are likely to intermittently engage in aggressive/violent behaviours, are more emotionally labile than the classic narcissist, etc.

There are, therefore, three "basic" types of narcissists:

1. ***The offspring of neglecting parents*** – They default to narcissism as the predominant object relation (with themselves as the exclusive love object).
2. ***The offspring of doting or domineering parents (often narcissists themselves)*** – They internalise their parents' voices in the form of a sadistic, ideal, immature Superego and spend their lives trying to be perfect, omnipotent, omniscient and to be judged "a success" by these parent-images and their later representations and substitutes (authority figures).
3. ***The offspring of abusive parents*** – They internalise the abusing, demeaning and contemptuous voices and spend their lives in an effort to elicit "counter-voices" from other people and thus to regulate their labile self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

All three types experience recurrent and Sisyphean failures. Shielded by their defence mechanisms, they constantly gauge reality wrongly, their actions and reactions become more and more rigid and the damage inflicted by them on themselves and on others is ever greater.

The narcissistic parent seems to employ a myriad primitive defences in his dealings with his children:

Splitting – Idealising the child and devaluing him in cycles, which reflect the internal dynamics of the parent rather than anything the child does.

Projective Identification – Forcing the child to behave in a way which vindicates the parent's fears regarding himself or herself, his or her self-image and his or her self-worth. This is a particularly powerful and pernicious mechanism. If the narcissist parent fears his own deficiencies ("defects"), vulnerability, perceived weaknesses, susceptibility, gullibility, or emotions – he is likely to force the child to "feel" these rejected and (to him) repulsive emotions, to behave in ways strongly abhorred by the parent, to exhibit character traits the parent strongly rejects in himself.

Projection - The child, in a way, becomes the "trash bin" of the parents' inhibitions, fears, self-loathing, self-contempt, perceived lack of self-worth, sense of inadequacy, rejected traits, repressed emotions, failures and emotional reticence.

Coupled with the parent's treatment of the child as the parent's extension, these psychological defenses totally inhibit the psychological growth and emotional maturation of the child. The child becomes a reflection of the parent, a conduit through which the parent experiences and realises himself for better (hopes, aspirations, ambition, life goals) and for worse (weaknesses, "undesirable" emotions, "negative" traits).

Relationships between [such parents](#) and their progeny easily deteriorate to sexual or other modes of [abuse](#) because there are no functioning boundaries between them.

It seems that the child's reaction to a narcissistic parent can be either accommodation and assimilation or rejection.

Accommodation and Assimilation

The child accommodates, idealises and internalises (introjects) the narcissistic and abusive Primary Object successfully. This means that the child's "internal voice" is also narcissistic and abusive. The child tries to comply with its directives and with its explicit and perceived wishes.

The child becomes a masterful provider of [Narcissistic Supply](#), a perfect match to the parent's personality, an ideal source, an accommodating, understanding and caring caterer to all the needs, whims, mood swings and cycles of the narcissist. The child learns to endure devaluation and idealisation with equanimity and adapt to the narcissist's world view. The child, in short, becomes the ultimate extension. This is what we call an "inverted narcissist".

We must not neglect the abusive aspect of such a relationship. The narcissistic parent always alternates between idealisation and devaluation of his offspring. The child is likely to internalise the devaluing, abusive, critical, demeaning, berating, diminishing, minimising, upbraiding, chastising voices.

The parent (or caregiver) goes on to survive inside the child-turned-adult (as part of a sadistic and ideal Superego and an unrealistic Ego Ideal). These voices are so powerful that they inhibit even the development of reactive narcissism, the child's typical defence mechanism.

The child-turned-adult keeps looking for narcissists in order to feel whole, alive and wanted. He craves to be treated by a narcissist narcissistically. What others call abuse is, to him or her, familiar territory and constitutes Narcissistic Supply. To the

Inverted Narcissist, the classic narcissist is a Source of Supply (primary or secondary) and his narcissistic behaviours constitute Narcissistic Supply. The IN feels dissatisfied, empty and unwanted when not "loved" by a narcissist.

The roles of Primary Source of Narcissistic Supply (PSNS) and Secondary Source of Narcissistic Supply (SSNS) are reversed. To the inverted narcissist, her narcissistic spouse is a Source of **PRIMARY** Narcissistic Supply.

The child can also reject the narcissistic parent rather than accommodate her or him.

Rejection

The child may react to the narcissism of the Primary Object with a peculiar type of rejection. He develops his own narcissistic personality, replete with grandiosity and lack of empathy – but his personality is antithetical to that of the narcissistic parent.

If the parent were a somatic narcissist, the child is likely to grow up to be a cerebral one. If his father prided himself being virtuous, the son turns out sinful. If his narcissistic mother bragged about her frugality, he is bound to profligately flaunt his wealth.

An Attempted DSM Style List of Criteria

It is possible to compose a DSM-IV-TR-like set of criteria for the Inverted Narcissist, using the classic narcissists' as a template. The two are, in many ways, two sides of the same coin, or "the mould and the moulded" - hence the neologisms "mirror narcissist" or "inverted narcissist".

The narcissist tries to merge with an idealised but badly internalised object. He does so by "digesting" the meaningful others in his life and transforming them into extensions of his self. He uses various techniques to achieve this. To the "digested", this is the crux of the harrowing experience called "life with a narcissist".

The "inverted narcissist" (IN), on the other hand, does not attempt, except in fantasy or in dangerous, masochistic sexual practice, to merge with an idealised external object. This is because he so successfully internalised the narcissistic Primary Object to the exclusion of all else. The IN feels ill at ease in his relationships with non-narcissists because it is unconsciously perceived by him to constitute "betrayal", "cheating", an abrogation of the exclusivity clause he has with the narcissistic Primary Object.

This is the big difference between narcissists and their inverted version.

Classic narcissists of all stripes reject the Primary Object in particular (and object relations in general) in favour of a handy substitute: themselves.

Inverted Narcissists accept the (narcissist) Primary Object and internalise it – to the exclusion of all others (unless they are perceived to be faithful renditions, replicas of the narcissistic Primary Object).

Criterion ONE

Possesses a rigid sense of lack of self-worth.

The classic narcissist has a badly regulated sense of self-worth. However this is not conscious. He goes through [cycles](#) of self-devaluation (and experiences them as dysphorias).

The IN's sense of self-worth does not fluctuate. It is rather stable – but it is very low. Whereas the narcissist devalues others – the IN devalues himself as an offering, a sacrifice to the narcissist. The IN pre-empts the narcissist by devaluing himself, by actively berating his own achievements, or talents. The IN is exceedingly distressed when singled out because of actual accomplishments or a demonstration of superior skills.

The inverted narcissist is compelled to filter all of her narcissistic needs through the primary narcissist in her life. Independence or personal autonomy are not permitted. The IN feels amplified by the narcissist's running commentary (because nothing can be accomplished by the invert without the approval of a primary narcissist in their lives).

Criterion TWO

Pre-occupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance and beauty or of an ideal of love.

This is the same as the DSM-IV-TR criterion for Narcissistic Personality Disorder but, with the IN, it manifests absolutely differently, i.e. the cognitive dissonance is sharper here because the IN is so absolutely and completely convinced of their worthlessness that these fantasies of grandeur are extremely painful "dissonances".

With the narcissist, the dissonance exists on two levels:

Between the unconscious feeling of lack of stable self-worth and the grandiose fantasies

AND between the grandiose fantasies and reality (the Grandiosity Gap).

In comparison, the Inverted Narcissist can only vacillate between lack of self-worth and reality. No grandiosity is permitted, except in dangerous, forbidden fantasy. This shows that the Invert is psychologically incapable of fully realising her inherent potentials without a primary narcissist to filter the praise, adulation or accomplishments through. She must have someone to whom praise can be redirected. The dissonance between the IN's certainty of self-worthlessness and genuine praise that cannot be deflected is likely to emotionally derail the Inverted Narcissist every time.

Criterion THREE

Believes that she is absolutely un-unique and un-special (i.e., worthless and not worthy of merger with the fantasised ideal) and that no one at all could understand her because she is innately unworthy of being understood. The IN becomes very agitated the more one tries to understand her because that also offends against her righteous sense of being properly excluded from the human race.

A sense of worthlessness is typical of many other PDs (as well as the feeling that no one could ever understand them). The narcissist himself endures prolonged periods of self-devaluation, self-deprecation and self-effacement. This is part of the [Narcissistic Cycle](#). In this sense, the inverted narcissist is a partial narcissist. She is permanently fixated in a part of the narcissistic cycle, never to experience its complementary half: the narcissistic grandiosity and sense of entitlement.

The "righteous sense of being properly excluded" comes from the sadistic Superego in concert with the "overbearing, externally reinforced, conscience".

(continued below)

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Criterion FOUR

Demands anonymity (in the sense of seeking to remain excluded at all costs) and is intensely irritated and uncomfortable with any attention being paid to her – similar to the [Schizoid PD](#).

Criterion FIVE

Feels that she is undeserving and not entitled.

Feels that she is inferior to others, lacking, insubstantial, unworthy, unlikable, unappealing, unlovable, someone to scorn and dismiss, or to ignore.

Criterion SIX

Is extinguishingly selfless, sacrificial, even unctuous in her interpersonal relationships and avoids the assistance of others at all costs. Can only interact with others when she can be seen to be giving, supportive, and expending an unusual effort to assist.

Some narcissists behave the [same way](#) but only as a means to obtain Narcissistic Supply (praise, adulation, affirmation, attention). This must not be confused with the behaviour of the IN.

Criterion SEVEN

Lacks empathy. Is intensely attuned to others' needs, but only in so far as it relates to her own need to perform the required self-sacrifice, which in turn is necessary in order for the IN to obtain her Narcissistic Supply from the primary narcissist.

By contrast, narcissists are never empathic. They are intermittently attuned to others only in order to optimise the extraction of Narcissistic Supply from them.

Criterion EIGHT

Enviies others. Cannot conceive of being envied and becomes extremely agitated and uncomfortable if even brought into a situation where comparison might occur. Loathes competition and avoids competition at all costs, if there is any chance of actually winning the competition, or being singled out.

Criterion NINE

Displays extreme shyness, lack of any real relational connections, is publicly self-effacing in the extreme, is internally highly moralistic and critical of others; is a perfectionist and engages in lengthy ritualistic behaviours, which can never

*be perfectly performed (obsessive-compulsive, though not necessarily to the full extent exhibited in *Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder*). Notions of being individualistic are anathema.*

The Reactive Patterns of the Inverted Narcissist (IN)

The Inverted Narcissist does not suffer from a "milder" form of narcissism. Like the "classic" narcissists, it has degrees and shades. But it is much more rare and the DSM-IV-TR variety is the more prevalent.

The Inverted Narcissist is liable to react with rage whenever threatened, or...

...When envious of other people's achievements, their ability to feel wholeness, happiness, rewards and successes, when her sense of self-worthlessness is diminished by a behaviour, a comment, an event, when her lack of self-worth and voided self-esteem is threatened. Thus, this type of narcissist might surprisingly react violently or wrathfully to **GOOD** things: a kind remark, a mission accomplished, a reward, a compliment, a proposition, or a sexual advance.

...When thinking about the past, when emotions and memories are evoked (usually negative ones) by certain music, a given smell, or sight.

...When her pathological envy leads to an all-pervasive sense of injustice and being discriminated against or deprived by a spiteful world.

...When she comes across stupidity, avarice, dishonesty, bigotry – it is these qualities in herself that all types of narcissists really fear and reject so vehemently in others.

...When she believes that she failed (and she always entertains this belief), that she is imperfect and useless and worthless, a good for nothing half-baked creature.

...When she realises to what extent her inner demons possess her, constrain her life, torment her, deform her and the hopelessness of it all.

When the Inverted Narcissist rages, she becomes verbally and emotionally abusive. She uncannily spots and attacks the vulnerabilities of her target, and mercilessly drives home the poisoned dagger of despair and self-loathing until it infects her adversary.

The calm after such a storm is even eerier, a thundering silence. The Inverted Narcissist regrets her behaviour and admits her feelings while apologising profusely.

The Inverted Narcissist nurtures her negative emotions as yet another weapon of [self-destruction and self-defeat](#). It is from this repressed self-contempt and sadistic self-judgement that the narcissistic rage springs forth.

One important difference between Inverted Narcissists and non-narcissists is that the former are less likely to react with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) following the breakup of their relationships with a their narcissists. They seem to be "desensitised" to narcissists by their early upbringing.

Whereas the reactions of normal people to narcissistic behaviour patterns (and especially to the splitting and projective identification defence mechanisms and to the idealisation devaluation cycles) is shock, profound hurt and disorientation – inverted narcissists show none of the above.

The Life of the Inverted Narcissist

The IN is, usually, exceedingly and painfully shy as a child. Despite this social phobia, his grandiosity (absorbed from the parent) might direct him to seek "limelight" professions and occupations, which involve exposure, competition, "stage fright" and social friction.

The setting can vary from the limited (family) to the expansive (national media) – but, whatever it is, the result is constant conflict and feelings of discomfort, even terror and extreme excitement and thrill ("[adrenaline rush](#)"). This is because the IN's grandiosity is "imported" and not fully integrated. It is, therefore, not supportive of his "grandiose" pursuits (as is the case with the narcissist). On the contrary, the IN feels awkward, pitted on the edge of a precipice, contrived, false and misleading, not to say deceitful.

The Inverted Narcissist grows up in a stifling environment, whether it is an orthodox, hyper-religious, collectivist, or traditionalist culture, a monovalent, "black and white", doctrinarian and indoctrinating society – or a family which manifests all the above in a microcosm all its own.

The Inverted Narcissist is cast in a negative (emergent) role within his family. His "negativity" is attributed to her gender, the order of her birth, religious, social, or cultural dictates and commandments, her "character flaws", her relation to a specific person or event, her acts or inaction and so on.

In the words of one such IN:

"In the religious culture I grew up in, women are SO suppressed, their roles are so carefully restricted. They are the representation, in the flesh, of all that is sinful, degrading, of all that is wrong with the world.

These are the negative gender/cultural images that were force fed to us the negative 'otherness' of women, as defined by men, was fed to me. I was so shy, withdrawn, unable to really relate to people at all from as early as I can remember."

The IN is subjected and exposed either to an overbearing, overvalued parent, or to an aloof, detached, emotionally unavailable one – or to both – at an early stage of his life.

"I grew up in the shadow of my father who adored me, put me on a pedestal, told me I could do or be anything I wanted because I was incredibly bright, BUT, he ate me alive, I was his property and an extension of him. I also grew up with the mounting hatred of my narcissist brother who got none of this attention from our father and got no attention from our mother either. My function was to make my father look wonderful in the eyes of all outsiders, the wonderful parent with a genius Wunderkind as his last child, and the only child of the six that he was physically present to raise from the get go. The overvaluation combined with being abjectly ignored or raged at by him when I stepped out of line even the tiniest bit, was enough to warp my personality."

The Invert is prevented from developing full-blown secondary narcissism. The Invert is so heavily preoccupied in his or her pre-school years with satisfying the narcissistic parent, that the traits of grandiosity and self-love, even the need for Narcissistic Supply, remain dormant or repressed.

The Invert simply "knows" that only the narcissistic parent can provide the requisite amount of Narcissistic Supply. The narcissistic parent is so controlling that any attempt to garner praise or adulation from any other source (without the approval of the parent) is severely punished by swift devaluation and even the occasional spanking or abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual).

This is a vital part of the conditioning that gives rise to inverted narcissism. Where the narcissist exhibits grandiosity, the Invert is intensely uncomfortable with personal praise, and wishes to always divert praise away from himself onto his narcissist. This is why the IN can only truly feel anything when she is in a relationship with another narcissist. The IN is conditioned and programmed from the very beginning to be the perfect companion to the narcissist. To feed his Ego, to be purely his extension, to seek only praise and adulation if it brings greater praise and adulation to her narcissist.

The Inverted Narcissist's Survival Guide

- Listen attentively to everything the narcissist says and agree with it all. Don't believe a word of it but let it slide as if everything is just fine, business as usual.
- Offer something absolutely unique to the narcissist which they cannot obtain anywhere else. Also be prepared to line up future Sources of Primary NS for your narcissist because you will not be **IT** for very long, if at all. If you take over the

procuring function for the narcissist, they become that much more dependent on you which makes it a bit tougher for them to pull their haughty stuff – an inevitability, in any case.

- Be endlessly patient and go way out of your way to be accommodating, thus keeping the Narcissistic Supply flowing liberally, and keeping the peace (relatively speaking).
- Get tremendous personal satisfaction out of endlessly giving. This one may not be attractive to you, but it is a take it or leave it proposition.
- Be absolutely emotionally and financially independent of the narcissist. Take what you need: the excitement and engulfment (i.e., NS) and refuse to get upset or hurt when the narcissist does or says something dumb. Yelling back works really well but should be reserved for special occasions when you fear your narcissist may be on the verge of leaving you; the silent treatment is better as an ordinary response, but it must be devoid of emotional content, more with the air of boredom and "I'll talk to you later, when I am good and ready, and when you are behaving in a more reasonable fashion."
- If your narcissist is cerebral and not interested in having much sex, give yourself ample permission to have sex with other people. Your cerebral narcissist is not indifferent to infidelity so discretion and secrecy is of paramount importance.
- If your narcissist is somatic and you don't mind, join in on group sex encounters but make sure that you choose properly for your narcissist. They are heedless and very indiscriminating in respect of sexual partners and that can get very problematic (sexually Transmitted Diseases blackmail come to mind).
- If you are a "fixer" which most Inverted Narcissists are, focus on fixing situations, preferably before they become "situations". Don't for one moment delude yourself that you can actually fix the narcissist – it simply will not happen. Not because they are being stubborn – they just simply can't be fixed.
- If there is any fixing that can be done, it is to help your narcissist become aware of their condition, and (this is very important) with no negative implications or accusations in the process at all. It is like living with a physically handicapped person and being able to discuss, calmly, unemotionally, what the [limitations and benefits](#) of the handicap are and how the two of you can work with these factors, rather than trying to change them.

- Finally, and most important of all for the Inverted Narcissist: get to know yourself.
 What are you getting from the relationship? Are you actually a masochist?
 Why is this relationship attractive and interesting?
 Define for yourself what good and beneficial things you believe you are receiving in this relationship. Define the things that you find harmful to you.
 Develop strategies to minimise the harm to yourself.
 Don't expect that you will cognitively be able to reason with the narcissist to change who they are. You may have some limited success in getting your narcissist to tone down on the really harmful behaviours that affect you, which emanate from the unchangeable essence of the narcissist. This can only be accomplished in a very trusting, frank and open relationship.

The Inverted Narcissist can have a reasonably good, long lasting relationship with the narcissist. You must be prepared to give your narcissist a lot of space and leeway.

You don't really exist for them as a fully realised person – no one does. They are not fully realised people so they cannot possibly have the skills, no matter how smart or sexy, to be a complete person in the sense that most adults are complete.

Somatic versus Cerebral Inverted Narcissists (IN)

The Inverted Narcissist is really an erstwhile narcissist internalised by the IN. Inevitably, we are likely to find among the Inverted the same propensities, predilections, preferences and inclinations that we do among proper narcissists.

The cerebral IN is an IN whose source of vicarious Primary Narcissistic Supply lies – through the medium and mediation of a narcissist – in the exercise of his intellectual faculties. A somatic IN would tend to make use of his body, sex, shape or health in trying to secure NS for "her" narcissist.

The Inverted Narcissist feeds on the primary narcissist and this is his Narcissistic Supply. So these two typologies can essentially become a self-supporting, [symbiotic system](#).

In reality though, both the narcissist and the Inverted Narcissist need to be quite well aware of the dynamics of this relationship in order to make it work as a successful long-term arrangement. It might well be that this symbiosis would only work between a cerebral narcissist and a cerebral Invert. The somatic narcissist's incessant sexual dalliances would be far too threatening to the equanimity of the cerebral Invert for there to be much chance of this succeeding, even for a short time.

It would seem that only opposing types of narcissist can get along when two classic narcissists are involved in a couple. It follows, syllogistically, that only identical types of narcissist and inverted narcissist can survive in a couple. In other words: the best, most enduring couples of narcissist and his inverted narcissist mate would involve a somatic narcissist and a somatic IN – or a cerebral narcissist and a cerebral IN.

Coping with Narcissists and Non-Narcissists

The Inverted Narcissist is a person who grew up enthralled by the narcissistic parent. This parent engulfed and subsumed the child's being to such an extent that the child's personality was irrevocably shaped by this immersion, damaged beyond hope of repair. The child was not even able to develop defence mechanisms such as narcissism.

The end result is an Inverted Narcissistic personality. The traits of this personality are primarily evident in the context of romantic relationships. The child was conditioned by the narcissistic parent to only be entitled to feel whole, useful, happy, and productive when the child augmented or mirrored to the parent the parent's False Self. As a result the child is shaped by this engulfment and cannot feel complete in any significant adult relationship unless they are with a narcissist.

The Inverted Narcissist in Relationship with the Narcissist

The Inverted Narcissist is drawn to significant relationships with other narcissists in her adulthood. These relationships are usually spousal primary relationships but can also be friendships with narcissists outside of the primary love relationship.

In a primary relationship, the Inverted Narcissist attempts to re-create the parent-child relationship. The Invert thrives on mirroring to the narcissist his own grandiosity and in so doing the Invert obtains her own Narcissistic Supply (which is the dependence of the narcissist upon the Invert for their Secondary Narcissistic Supply).

The Invert must have this form of relationship with a narcissist in order to feel whole. The Invert goes as far as needed to ensure that the narcissist is happy, cared for, properly adored, as she feels is the narcissist's right. The Invert glorifies and lionizes her narcissist, places him on a pedestal, endures any and all narcissistic devaluation with calm equanimity, impervious to the overt slights of the narcissist.

Narcissistic rage is handled deftly by the Inverted Narcissist. The Invert is exceedingly adept at managing every aspect of her life, tightly controlling all situations, so as to minimise the potential for the inevitable narcissistic rages of his narcissist.

The Invert wishes to be subsumed by the narcissist. The Invert only feels truly loved and alive in this kind of relationship. The invert is loath to abandon her relationships with narcissists. The relationship only ends when the narcissist withdraws completely from the symbiosis. Once the narcissist has determined that the Invert is of no further use, and withholds all Narcissistic Supply from the Invert, only then does the Invert reluctantly move on to another relationship.

The Invert is most likely to equate sexual intimacy with engulfment. This can be easily misread to mean that the Invert is himself or herself a somatic narcissist, but it would be incorrect. The Invert can endure years of minimal sexual contact with their narcissist and still be able to maintain the self-delusion of intimacy and engulfment. The Invert finds a myriad of other ways to "merge" with the narcissist, becoming intimately, though only in support roles, involved with the narcissist's business, career, or any other activity where the Invert can feel that they are needed by the narcissist and indispensable.

The Invert is an expert at doling out Narcissistic Supply and even goes as far as procuring Primary Narcissistic Supply for their narcissist (even where this means finding another lover for the narcissist, or participating in group sex with the narcissist).

Usually though, the Invert seems most attracted to the cerebral narcissist and finds him easier to manage than the somatic narcissist. The cerebral narcissist is disinterested in sex and this makes life considerably easier for the Invert, i.e., the Invert is less likely to "lose" their cerebral narcissist to another primary partner. A somatic narcissist may be prone to changing partners with greater frequency or wish to have no partner, preferring to have multiple, casual sexual relationships of no apparent depth which never last very long.

The Invert regards relationships with narcissists as the only true and legitimate form of primary relationship. The Invert is capable of having primary relationships with non-narcissists. But without the engulfment and the drama, the Invert feels unneeded, unwanted and emotionally uninvolved.

When Can a Classic Narcissist Become an Inverted Narcissist?

A classic narcissist can become an inverted narcissist in one (or more) of the following (typically cumulative) circumstances:

- a. Immediately following a life crisis and a [narcissistic injury](#) (divorce, devastating financial loss, death of a parent, or a child, imprisonment, loss of social status and, in general, any other narcissistic injury).
- b. When the injured narcissist then meets another - classic - narcissist who restores a sense of meaning and superiority (uniqueness) to his life. The

injured narcissist derives Narcissistic Supply vicariously, by proxy, through the "dominant" narcissist.

- c. As part of an effort to secure a particularly desired Source of Narcissistic Supply. The conversion from classic to inverted narcissism serves to foster an attachment (bonding) between the narcissist and his source. When the narcissist judges that the source is his and can be taken for granted, he reverts to his former, classically narcissistic self. Such a "conversion" is always temporary. It does not last and the narcissist reverts to his "default" or dominant state.

When Can an Inverted Narcissist become a Classic Narcissist?

The inverted narcissist can become a classic narcissist in one (or more) of the following (typically cumulative) circumstances:

- a. Immediately following a life crisis that involves the incapacitation or dysfunction of the inverted narcissist's partner (sickness, accident, demotion, divorce, devastating financial loss, death of a parent, or a child, imprisonment, loss of social status and, in general, any other narcissistic injury).
- b. When the inverted narcissist, injured and disillusioned, then meets another - inverted - narcissist who restores a sense of meaning and superiority (uniqueness) to his life. The injured narcissist derives Narcissistic Supply from the inverted narcissist.
- c. As part of an effort to secure a particularly desired Source of Narcissistic Supply. The conversion from inverted to classic narcissism serves to foster an attachment (bonding) between the narcissist and his source. When the narcissist judges that the source is his and can be taken for granted, he reverts to his former, inverted narcissistic self. Such a "conversion" is always temporary. It does not last and the narcissist reverts to his "default" or dominant state.

Relationships between the Inverted Narcissist and Non-Narcissists

The Inverted Narcissist can maintain relationships outside of the symbiotic primary relationship with a narcissist. But the Invert does not "feel" loved because she finds the non-narcissist not "engulfing" or not "exciting". Thus, the Invert tends to devalue their non-narcissistic primary partner as less worthy of the Inverts' love and attention.

(continued below)

This article appears in my book, "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited"

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The Invert may be able to sustain a relationship with a non-narcissist by finding other narcissistic symbiotic relationships outside of this primary relationship. The Invert may, for instance, have a narcissistic friend or lover, to whom he pays extraordinary attention, ignoring the real needs of the non-narcissistic partner.

Consequently, the only semi-stable primary relationship between the Invert and the non-narcissist occurs where the non-narcissist is very easy going, emotionally secure and not needing much from the Invert at all by way of time, energy or commitment to activities requiring the involvement of both parties. In a relationship with this kind of non-narcissist, the Invert may become a workaholic or very involved in outside activities that exclude the non-narcissist spouse.

It appears that the Inverted Narcissist in a relationship with a non-narcissist is behaviourally indistinguishable from a true narcissist. The only important exception is that the Invert does not rage at his non-narcissist partner – she instead withdraws from the relationship even further. This passive-aggressive reaction has been noted, though, with narcissists as well.

Inverted and Other Atypical / Partial (NOS) Narcissists

Inverted Narcissists Talk about Themselves

Competition and (Pathological) Envy

"I have a dynamic that comes up with every single person I get close to, where I feel extremely competitive toward and envious of the other person. But I don't ACT competitive, because at the very outset, I see myself as the loser in the competition. I would never dream of trying to beat the other person, because I know deep in my heart that they would win and I would be utterly humiliated. There are fewer things on earth that feel worse to me than losing a contest and having the other person gloat over me, especially if they know how much I cared about not losing. This is one thing that I actually feel violent about. I guess I tend

to project the grandiosity part of the NPD package onto the other person rather than on a False Ego of my own. So most of the time I'm stuck in a state of deep resentment and envy toward her. To me, she's always far more intelligent, likable, popular, talented, self-confident, emotionally developed, morally good, and attractive than I am. And I really hate her for that, and feel humiliated by it. So it's incredibly hard for me to feel happy for this person when she has a success, because I'm overcome with humiliation about myself. This has ruined many a close relationship. I tend to get this way about one person at a time, usually the person who is playing the role of 'my better half', best friends or lovers/partners. So it's not like I'm unable to be happy for anyone, ever, or that I envy every person I meet. I don't get obsessed with how rich or beautiful movie stars are or anything like that. It only gets projected onto this partner-person, the person I'm depending on the most in terms of supplies (attention, reassurance, security, building up my self-esteem, etc.)...

...The really destructive thing that happens is, I see her grandiose traits as giving her the power to have anything and anyone she wants. So I feel a basic insecurity, because why should she stay with a loser like me, when she's obviously so out of my league? So really, what I'm envious of is the power that all that talent, social ability, beauty, etc., gives her to have CHOICES – the choice to stay or leave me. Whereas I am utterly dependent on her. It's this emotional inequality that I find so humiliating."

"I agree with the inverted narcissist designation – sometimes I've called myself a 'closet narcissist'. That is, I've internalised the value system of grandiosity, but have not applied the grandiose identity to myself.

I believe I SHOULD BE those grandiose things, but at the same time, I know I'm not and I'm miserable about it. So people don't think of me as having an inflated Ego – and indeed I don't – but scratch the surface, and you'll find all these inflated expectations. I mean to say that perhaps the parents suppressed every manifestation of grandiosity (very common in early childhood) and of narcissism – so that the defence mechanism that narcissism is was 'inverted' and internalised in this unusual form."

"Maybe there aren't two discrete states (NPD vs. 'regular' low self-esteem) – maybe it's more of a continuum. And maybe it's just the degree and depth of the problem that distinguishes one from the other.

My therapist describes NPD as 'the inability to love oneself'. As she defines it, the 'narcissistic wound' is a deep wounding of the sense of self, the image of oneself. That doesn't mean that other disorders – or for that matter, other life stressors – can't also cause low self-esteem. But I think NPD IS low self-esteem...

That's what the disorder is really about – an image of yourself that is profoundly negative, and the inability to attain a normal and healthy self-image..."

"Yes, I'm a survivor of child abuse. But remember that not all abuse is alike. There are different kinds of abuse, and different effects. My XXX's style of abuse had to do with trying to annihilate me as a separate person. It also had to do with the need to put all his negative self-image onto me – to see in me what he hated in himself. So I got to play the role of the loser that he secretly feared he was. I was flipped back and forth in those roles – sometimes I'd be a Source of NS for him, and other times I was the receptacle of all his pain and rage. Sometimes my successes were used to reflect back on him, to show off to the rest of the family. Other times, my successes were threatening to my father, who suddenly feared that I was superior to him and had to be squelched. I experience emotions that most people I know don't feel. Or maybe they do feel them, but to far less extreme intensity. For example, the envy and comparison/competition I feel toward others. I guess most of us have experienced rivalry, jealousy, being compared to others. Most of us have felt envy at another's success. Yet most people I know seem able to overcome those feelings to some extent, to be able to function normally. In a competition, for example, they may be driven to do their best so they can win. For me, the fear of losing and being humiliated is so intense that I avoid competition completely. I am terrified of showing people that I care about doing well, because it's so shaming for me if I lose. So I underachieve and pretend I don't care. Most people I know may envy another person's good luck or success, but it doesn't prevent them from also being happy for them and supporting them. But for me, when I'm in a competitive dynamic with someone, I can't hear about any of their successes, or compliments they've received, etc. I don't even like to see the person doing good things, like bringing Thanksgiving leftovers to the sick old guy next door, because those things make me feel inferior for not thinking of doing that myself (and not having anyone in my life that I'd do that for). It's just so incredibly painful for me to see evidence of the other person's good qualities, because it immediately brings up my feeling of inferiority. I can't even stand to date someone, who looks really good, because I'm jealous of their good looks! So this deep and obsessive envy has destroyed my joy in other people. All the things about other people that I love and take pleasure in is a double-edged sword because I also hate them for it, for having those good qualities (while, presumably, I don't). I don't know – do you think this is garden-variety low self-esteem? I know plenty of people who suffer from lack of confidence, from timidity, social awkwardness, hatred of their body, feeling unlovable, etc. But they don't have this kind of hostile, corrosive resentment of another person for being all the wonderful things that they can't be, or aren't allowed to be, etc. And one thing I hate is when people are judgemental of me about how I feel, as though I can help it. It's like, 'You shouldn't be so selfish, you should feel happy for her that she's successful', etc. They don't understand that I would love to feel those things, but I can't. I can't stop the incredible pain that explodes in me when these feelings get triggered, and I often can't even HIDE the

feelings. It's just so overwhelming. I feel so damaged sometimes. There's more, but that's the crux of it for me, anyway."

Getting Compliments

"I love getting compliments and rewards, and do not react negatively to them. In some moods, when my self-hate has gotten triggered, I can sometimes get to places where I'm inconsolable, because I get stuck in bitterness and self-pity, and so I doubt the sincerity or the reliability of the good thing that someone is saying to me (to try to cheer me up or whatever). But, if I'm in a reasonable mood and someone offers me something good, I'm all too happy to accept it! I don't have a stake in staying miserable."

The Partiality of the Condition

"I do agree that it's (atypical or inverted narcissism) not MILDER. But how I see it is that it's PARTIAL. The part that's there is just as destructive as it is in the typical narcissist. But there are parts missing from that total, full-blown disorder – and I see that as healthy, actually. I see it as parts of myself that WEREN'T infected by the pathology, that are still intact.

In my case, I did not develop the overweening Ego part of the disorder. So in a sense, what you have with me is the naked pathology, with no covering: no suaveness, no charm, no charisma, no confidence, no persuasiveness, but also no excuses, no lies, no justifications for my feelings. Just the ugly self-hate, for all to see. And the self-hate part is just as bad as it is with a full-blown narcissist, so again, it's not milder.

But because I don't have the denial part of the disorder, I have a lot more insight, a lot more motivation to do something about my problems (i.e., I 'self-refer' to therapy), and therefore, I think, a lot more hope of getting better than people whose defence involves totally denying they even have a problem."

"When my full-blown XXX's pathological envy would get triggered, he would respond by putting down the person he was envious of – or by putting down the accomplishment itself, or whatever good stuff the other person had. He'd trivialise it, or outright contradict it, or find some way to convince the other person (often me) that the thing they're feeling good about isn't real, or isn't worthwhile, or is somehow bad, etc. He could do this because the inflated Ego defence was fully formed and operating with him.

When MY pathological envy gets triggered, I will be bluntly honest about it. I'll say something self-pitying, such as: 'You always get the good stuff, and I get nothing'; 'You're so much better than I'; 'People like you better – you have good social skills and I'm a jerk'; and so on. Or I might even get hostile and sarcastic:

'Well, it must be nice to have so many people worshipping you, isn't it?' I don't try to convince myself that the other person's success isn't real or worthwhile, etc. Instead, I'm totally flooded with the pain of feeling utterly inferior and worthless – and there's no way for me to convince myself or anyone else otherwise. I'm not saying that the things I say are pleasant to hear – and it is still manipulative of me to say them, because the other person's attention is drawn away from their joy and onto my pain and hostility. And instead of doubting their success's worth or reality, they feel guilty about it, or about talking about it, because it hurts me so much. So from the other person's point of view, maybe it's not any easier to live with a partial narcissist than with a full-blown, in that their joys and successes lead to pain in both cases. It's certainly not easier for me, being flooded with rage and pain instead of being able to hide behind a delusion of grandeur. But from my therapist's point of view, I'm much better off because I know I'm unhappy – it's in my face all the time. So I'm motivated to work on it and change it. And time has borne her words out. Over the past several years that I've worked on this issue, I have changed a great deal in how I deal with it. Now when the envy gets triggered, I don't feel so entwined with the other person – I recognise that it's my OWN pain getting triggered, not something they are doing to me. And so I can acknowledge the pain in a more responsible way, taking ownership of it by saying, 'The jealousy feelings are getting triggered again, and I'm feeling worthless and inferior. Can you reassure me that I'm not?' That's a lot better than making some snide, hostile, or self-pitying comment that puts the other person on the defensive or makes them feel guilty... I do prefer the term 'partial' because that's what it feels like to me. It's like a building that's partially built – the house of narcissism. For me, the structure is there, but not the outside, so you can see inside the skeleton to all the junk that's inside. It's the same junk that's inside a full-blown narcissist, but their building is completed, so you can't see inside. Their building is a fortress, and it's almost impossible to bring it down. My defences aren't as strong ... which makes my life more difficult in some ways because I REALLY feel my pain. But it also means that the house can be brought down more easily, and the junk inside cleaned out..."

Thinking about the Past and the World

"I don't usually get rageful about the past. I feel sort of emotionally cut-off from the past, actually. I remember events very clearly, but usually can't remember the feelings. When I do remember the feelings, my reaction is usually one of sadness, and sometimes of relief that I can get back in touch with my past. But not rage. All my rage seems to get displaced on the current people in my life."

"...When I see someone being really socially awkward and geeky, passive-aggressive, indirect and victim-like, it does trigger anger in me because I identify with that person and I don't want to. I try to put my negative feelings onto them, to see that person as the jerk, not me – that's what a narcissist does, after all. But for me it doesn't completely work because I know, consciously, what I'm trying to do. And ultimately, I'm not kidding anyone, least of all myself."

Self-Pity and Depression

"More self-pity and depression here – not so much rage. One of the things that triggers my rage more than anything else is the inability to control another person, the inability to dominate them and force my reality on them. I feel impotent, humiliated, forced back on my empty self. Part of what I'm feeling here is envy: that person who can't be controlled clearly has a self and I don't, and I just hate them for it. But it's also a power struggle – I want to get Narcissistic Supply by being in control and on top and having the other person submissive and compliant..."

Regretting, Admitting Mistakes

"I regret my behaviour horribly, and I DO admit my feelings. I am also able, in the aftermath, to have empathy for the feelings of the person I've hurt, and I'm horribly sad about it, and ashamed of myself. It's as though I'd been possessed by a demon, acted out all this abusive horrible stuff, and then, after the departure of the demon, I'm back in my right mind and it's like, 'What have I DONE???' I don't mean I'm not responsible for what I did (i.e., a demon made me do it). But when I'm triggered, I have no empathy – I can only see my projection onto that person, as a huge threat to me, someone who must be demolished. But when my head clears, I see that person's pain, hurt, fear – and I feel terrible. I want to make it up to them. And that feeling is totally sincere – it's not an act. I'm genuinely sorry for the pain I've caused the other person."

Rage

"I wouldn't say that my rage comes from repressed self-contempt (mine is not repressed – I'm totally aware of it). And it's not missing atonement either, since I do atone. The rage comes from feeling humiliated, from feeling that the other person has somehow sadistically and gleefully made me feel inferior, that they're getting off on being superior, that they're mocking me and ridiculing me, that they have scorn and contempt for me and find it all very amusing. That – whether real or imagined (usually imagined) – is what causes my rage."

Pursuing Relationships with Narcissists

"There are some very few of us who actually seek out relationships with narcissists. We do this with the full knowledge that we are not wanted, despised even. We persist and pursue no matter the consequences, no matter the cost."

I am an 'inverted narcissist'. It is because as a child I was 'imprinted/fixated' with a particular pattern involving relationships. I was engulfed so completely by my father's personality and repressed so severely by various other factors in my childhood that I simply didn't develop a recognisable personality. I existed purely

as an extension of my father. I was his genius Wunderkind. He ignored my mother and poured all his energy and effort into me. I did not develop full-blown secondary narcissism... I developed into the perfect 'other half' of the narcissists moulding me. I became the perfect, eager co-dependent. And this is an imprint, a pattern in my psyche, a way of (not) relating to the world of relationships by only being able to truly relate to one person (my father) and then one kind of person – the narcissist.

He is my perfect lover, my perfect mate, a fit that is so slick and smooth, so comfortable and effortless, so filled with meaning and actual feelings – that's the other thing. I cannot feel on my own. I am incomplete. I can only feel when I am engulfed by another (first it was my father) and now – well now it has to be a narcissist. Not just any narcissist either. He must be exceedingly smart, good looking, have adequate reproductive equipment and some knowledge on how to use it and that's about it.

When I am engulfed by someone like this I feel completed, I can actually FEEL. I am whole again. I function as a sibyl, an oracle, an extension of the narcissist. His fiercest protector, his purveyor/procurer of NS, the secretary, organiser, manager, etc. I think you get the picture and this gives me INTENSE PLEASURE.

So the answer to your question: 'Why would anyone want to be with someone who doesn't want them back?' The short answer is, 'Because there is no one else remotely worth looking at.'

Making Amends

"I mostly apologise, and I give the person space to talk about what hurt them so that (1) they get to express their anger or hurt to me, and (2) I can understand better and know better how not to hurt them (if I can avoid it) the next time there's a conflict. Sometimes the hurt I cause is unintentional – maybe I've been insensitive or forgetful or something, in which case I feel more certain that I can avoid repeating the hurtful behaviour, since I didn't want to hurt them in the first place. If the hurt I caused has to do with my getting my trigger pulled and going into a rage, then that hurt was quite deliberate, although at the time I was unable to experience the other person as vulnerable or capable of being hurt by me. And I do realise that if that trigger is pulled again, it might happen again. But I also hope that there'll be a LITTLE TINY window where the memory of the conversation will come back to me while I'm in my rage, and I'll remember that the person really IS vulnerable. I hope that by hearing over and over that the person actually does feel hurt by what I say while in rages, that I might remember that when I am triggered and raging. So, mostly I apologise and try to communicate with the other person. I don't verbally self-flagellate, because that's manipulative. Not to say I never do that – in fact I've had a dynamic with people where I verbally put myself down and try to engage the other person into arguing me out of it.

But if I'm in the middle of apologising to the other person for hurting them, then I feel like this is their moment, and I don't want to turn the focus toward getting them to try to make me feel better. I will talk about myself, but only in an attempt to communicate, so that we can understand each other better. I might say, 'I got triggered about such-and-such, and you seemed so invulnerable that it enraged me', etc. – and the other person might react with, 'But I was feeling vulnerable, I just couldn't show it', etc. – and we'll go back and forth like that. So it's not like I don't think my feelings count, and I do want the other person to UNDERSTAND my feelings, but I don't want to put the other person in the role of taking care of my feelings in that moment, because they have just been hurt by me and I'm trying to make it up to them, not squeeze more stuff OUT of them..."

(continued below)

This article appears in my book, "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited"

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"So when I've been a real jerk to someone, I want them to feel like it's OK to be pissed off at me, and I want them to know that I am interested in and focused on how they feel, not just on how I feel. As for gifts – I used to do that, but eventually I came to feel that that was manipulative, too, that it muddled things because then the other person would feel like they couldn't be angry anymore, since after all, I've just brought them this nice gift. I also feel that in general, gift-giving is a sweet and tender thing to do, and I don't want to sully that tenderness by associating it with the hurt that comes from abusive behaviour."

Why Narcissists?

"I am **BUILT** this way. I may have overstated it by saying that I have 'no choice' because, in fact I do.

The choice is – live in an emotionally deadened monochrome world where I can reasonably interact with normal people **OR** I can choose to be with a narcissist in

which case my world is Technicolor, emotionally satisfying, alive and wondrous (also can be turbulent and a real roller coaster ride for the unprepared, not to mention incredibly damaging for people who are not inverted narcissists and who fall into relationships with narcissists). As I have walked on both sides of the street, and because I have developed coping mechanisms that protect me really quite well, I can reasonably safely engage in a primary, intimate relationship with a narcissist without getting hurt by it.

The real WHY of it all is that I learned, as a young child, that being 'eaten alive' by a narcissist parent, to the point where your existence is but an extension of his own, was how all relationships ought to work. It is a psychological imprint – my 'love map', it is what feels right to me intrinsically. A pattern of living – I don't know how else to describe it so you and others will understand how very natural and normal this is for me. It is not the torturous existence that most of the survivors of narcissism are recounting on this list.

My experiences with narcissists, to me, ARE NORMAL for me. Comfortable like an old pair of slippers that fit perfectly. I don't expect many people to attempt to do this, to 'make themselves into' this kind of person. I don't think anyone could, if they tried.

It is my need to be engulfed and merged that drives me to these relationships and when I get those needs met I feel more normal, better about myself. I am the outer extension of the narcissist. In many ways I am a vanguard, a public two-way warning system, fiercely defending my narcissist from harm, and fiercely loyal to him, catering to his every need in order to protect his fragile existence. These are the dynamics of my particular version of engulfment. I don't need anyone to take care of me. I need only to be needed in this very particular way, by a narcissist who inevitably possesses the ability to engulf in a way that normal, fully realised adults cannot. It is somewhat paradoxical – I feel freer and more independent with a narcissist than without one. I achieve more in my life when I am in this form of relationship. I try harder, work harder, am more creative, think better of myself, excel in most every aspect of my life."

"...I go ahead and cater to him and pretend that his words don't hurt, and later, I engage in an internal fight with myself for being so damned submissive. It's a constant battle and I can't seem to decide which voice in my head I should listen to... I feel like a fool, yet, I would rather be a fool with him than a lonely, well-rounded woman without him. I've often said that the only way that we can stay together is because we feed off of each other. I give him everything he needs and he takes it. Seeing him happy and pleased is what gives me pleasure. I feel very successful then."

Partial NPD

"I do think it's uncommon for girls to develop these patterns, as they are usually trained to be self-effacing. I certainly was! However, I have a lot of the very same underlying patterns that full-blown, obnoxiously egotistical NP's have, but I am not egotistical because I didn't develop the pattern of inflated Ego and grandiosity. All the rest of it is there, though: fragile Ego, lack of a centre or self, super-sensitive to criticism and rejections, pathological, obsessive envy, comparisons and competitive attitudes toward others, a belief that everyone in the world is either superior or inferior to me, and so on.

Sometimes I kind of wish I had developed the inflated Ego of a complete NP, because then I would at least be able to hide from all the pain I feel. But at the same time, I'm glad I didn't, because those people have a much lower chance of recovery – how can they recover if they don't acknowledge anything is wrong? Whereas it's pretty clear to me I have problems, and I've spent my life working on them and trying to change myself and heal."

Narcissist-Non Narcissist and Narcissist-Inverted Narcissist Couples

"Can a N and a non-N ever maintain a long lasting marriage? It would seem that a non-N would have too much self-esteem to lend himself to a lifetime of catering and pandering to an N's unending need for unearned adoration and glory. I, as a non-N... got tired of these people and their unremitting attempts to drain my psyche within a relatively short period of time and abandoned them as soon as I realised what I was dealing with to preserve my own sanity."

"It depends on the non-narcissist, really. Narcissism is a RIGID, systemic pattern of responses. It is so all-pervasive and all-encompassing that it is a PERSONALITY disorder. If the non-narcissist is codependent, for instance, then the narcissist is a perfect match for him and the union will last..."

"You have to pimp for the narcissist, intellectually, and sexually. If your narcissist is somatic, you are much better off lining up the sex partners than leaving it to him. Intellectual pimping is more varied. You can think of wonderful things and then subtly string out the idea, in the most delicate of packages and watch the narcissist cogitate their way to 'their' brilliant discovery whilst you bask in the glow of their perfection and success... The point of this entire exercise is to assure YOUR supply, which is the narcissist himself, not to punish yourself by giving away a great idea or abase yourself because, of course, YOU are not worthy of having such a great idea on your own – but who knows, it may seem that way to the inverted narcissist. It really depends on how self-aware the inverted is."

"The only rejection you need to fear is the possibility of losing the narcissist and if one is doing everything else right, this is very unlikely to happen! So by 'emotionally independent' I am talking about being self-assured, doing your own thing, having a life, feeling strong and good about yourself, getting emotional

sustenance from other people. I mean, let's face it, a drug is a drug is a habit. Habits just are, and what they ARE NOT are the be all and end all of love, commitment and serene symmetrical, balanced emotional perfection that is the ideal of the romanticised 'love-for-a-lifetime' all-American relationship dream."

"(I am) terribly turned on by narcissists. The most exciting moments of my life in every venue have been with narcissists. It is as if living and loving with normal people is a grey thing by comparison, not fuelled by sufficient adrenaline. I feel like a junkie, now, that I no longer permit myself the giddy pleasure of the RUSH I used to know when I was deeply and hopelessly involved with an N. I am like a lotus-eater. And I always felt guilty about this and also sorry that I ever succumbed that first time to my first narcissist lover."

"I am exactly this way and I feel exactly as you do, that the world is a sepia motion picture but when I am intimately involved with a narcissist, it breaks out into three-dimensional Technicolor and I can see and feel in ways that are not available to me otherwise. In my case I developed this (inverted narcissism) as a result of being the favourite of my father who so completely absorbed me into his personality that I was not able to develop a sense of separation. So I am stuck in this personality matrix of needing to be engulfed, adored by and completely taken over by a narcissist in my life. In turn, I worship, defend, regulate and procure Narcissistic Supply for my narcissist. It is like the mould and the moulded."

"In my case, I realise that while I can't stop loving my current narcissist, it isn't necessary for me to avoid as long as I can understand. In my way of looking at it, he is deserving of love, and since I can give him love without it hurting me, then as long as he needs it, he shall have it."

"My personal theory is that dogmatic religious culture is a retarding influence on the growth and maturation of those heavily involved – more and more autonomy (and hence personal responsibility) seems to be blithely sacrificed to the group mind/spirit. It is as though the church members become one personality and that personality is narcissistic and the individual just folds under the weight of that kind of group pressure – particularly if you are a child."

"If I displayed behaviour that made my XXX look good to others, I was insipidly overvalued. When I dared be something other than who she wanted me to be, the sarcastic criticism and total devaluation was unbelievable. So, I learned to be all things to all people. I get a heavenly high from surrendering my power to a narcissist, to catering to them, in having them overvalue and need me, and it is the only time that I truly feel alive..."

"We have very little choice in all of this. We are as vacant and warped as the narcissist. XXX is wont to say, 'I don't HAVE a personality disorder, I AM a personality disorder.' It defines who we are and how we will respond. You will

always and ONLY have real feelings when you are with a narcissist. It is your love map, it is the programming within your psyche. Does it need to control your behaviour? Not necessarily. Knowing what you are can at least give you the opportunity to forecast the effect of an action before you take it. So, loveless black and white may be the very healthiest thing for you for the foreseeable future. I tend to think of these episodes with narcissists as being cyclic. You will likely need to cut loose for a while when your child is older.

DO NOT feel ashamed please! Should a physically handicapped person feel ashamed of their handicap? No and neither should we. The trouble with us is that we are fooled into thinking that these relationships are 'guilty pleasures'. They feel so very good for a time but they are more akin to addiction satisfaction rather than being the 'right match' or an 'appropriate relationship'. I am still very conflicted myself about this. I wrote a few months ago that it was like having a caged very dangerous animal inside of me. When I get near narcissists, the animal smells its own kind and it wants out. I very carefully 'micro-manage' my life. This means that I daily do fairly regular reality checks and keep a very tight reign on my self and my behaviours. I am also obsessive-compulsive."

"I feel as though I'm constantly on an emotional roller coaster. I may wake up in a good mood, but if my N partner does or says something, which is hurtful to me, my mood changes immediately. I now feel sad, empty, afraid. All I want to do at this point is anything that will make him say something NICE to me.

Once he does, I'm back on top of the world. This pattern of mood changes, or whatever you may call them, can take place several times a day. Each and every day. I've gotten to the point where I'm not sure that I can trust myself to feel any one way, because I know that I have no control over myself. He has the control. It's scary, yet I've sort of come to depend on him determining how I am going to feel."

"When I was first involved with my cerebral narcissist I was like this but after awhile I just learned to become more emotionally distant (the ups and downs were just too much) and find emotional gratification with other people, mostly girl friends and one of two male friends. I make a point of saying ... that the invert must be or become emotionally and financially independent (if you don't do this he will eat you up and when he has finished with you and you are nothing but a husk, you will be expelled from his life in one big vomit). It is really important for you to start to take responsibility for your own emotional wellness without regard to how he treats you. Remember that the narcissist has the emotional maturity of a two-year old! Don't expect much in the way of emotional depth or support in your relationship – he simply is not capable of anything that sophisticated."

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